

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel) joined a bipartisan majority of his colleagues in the House to approve legislation that will aid workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the economic downturn. The Emergency Extended Unemployment Compensation Act will immediately provide up to 26 weeks of extended unemployment benefits to jobless workers in California. It was approved by a vote of 274 to 137.

The Central Coast is home to two regions with the highest unemployment rates in the nation. The Salinas metropolitan area suffers from 7.9 percent unemployment (15th worst in the nation), while the Santa Cruz-Watsonville metropolitan area sits at 7.2 percent (21st from the bottom).

"It has become crystal clear that Californians have lost their jobs and need help supporting their families and making ends meet," Rep. Farr said following the vote. "Today, Republicans and Democrats joined to pass a bill that will give Americans who have lost their jobs some of the relief they need."

Americans across the country are facing rising costs of living while at the same suffering from the largest monthly increase in unemployment in 20 years. For the fifth straight month, the economy lost jobs and unemployment rose from 5 percent in April to 5.5 percent in May. Some communities on the Central Coast are facing unemployment rates nearing 8 percent.

"Sadly, the White House has suggested it will veto this bill," Rep. Farr said. "After presiding over an economic collapse, President Bush should be working with Democrats to turn the economy around."

The legislation approved in the House would benefit 3.8 million unemployed Americans, providing up to 13 weeks of extended unemployment benefits in every state and an extra 13 weeks to high-unemployment states, including California. The legislation will be paid for through the federal unemployment trust funds, which have sufficient reserves to cover the cost. The Senate passed similar legislation as part of a separate bill, so the two chambers will have to negotiate final passage.

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